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Pre-Press Conference Notes
December 10, 1958



International

General Persons suggested that the President open the conference with a little talk about the foreign situation, primarily about Berlin, reviewing the original tripartite agreement, the agreement at Geneva, etc., to show what we have been trying to do. General Goodpaster suggested two lines -- what we have been trying to do, and how we have met the Russian's proposals. The President reminded them they might have suggested this at least the evening before but did agree it might be good to get particularly the Berlin question into perspective. He said he would not do any good unless he could get over the idea that we want to be firm but ready to be friendly on the basis of mutual action. Khrushchev says we are trying to "threaten" him -- he takes any firm position as a threat. The President added that at the time the Berlin division was set up, everyone thought it would last a year at the outside.

The President raised the question which no one could really answer immediately -- what was the position of Willy Brandt on the question of the proposed "Free City" of Berlin. He had understood that the Mayor of Berlin was not opposed to it. This was checked during conference and the answer seems to be that his position is fuzzy, but that there is some indication that he is trying to negotiate on the matter.

Dealing with East Germans directly. Secretary Dulles was misquoted, and corrected impression he left at last news conference that we were willing to deal with East Germans.

Khrushchev letter regarding making Berlin free city within six months. Has not yet been answered.

Senator Humphrey and his statements that the Russians have an 8,000 mile missile and a 5 megaton bomb. Answer is that this has not altered our conception of Soviet capabilities.

Humphrey also said that Khrushchev made quite a point of implying that he would like to be invited to the United States.

Russian atomic plane. Stories are grossly exaggerated.

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Israel-Syria. Not appropriate to comment on it yet.

Milton Eisenhower's report on Latin America. He is working on it, consulting with Secretary of State and Secretary of Treasury.

DOMESTIC

Budget - President did not want any briefing.

Moon shots -- in connection with budget.



Some details of satellites to be used for observation, etc., discussed.

Integration. Civil Rights Commission action in Alabama discussed. Department of Justice is moving fast, expect to present case in a day or so. Might give President opportunity to express again his conviction of the right of all qualified citizens to vote. The President said that in the days when we were only talking about equal rights, some of his most respected southern friends had made one thing clear -- that a law that guaranteed equal voting rights for qualified citizens would not be seriously opposed. Here is involved respect for law -- in Alabama some of the people didn't show up, some refused to be sworn. Only one person produced voting record.

Question of prohibiting Negro children of Federal employees from attending Federal Schools on a military base discussed. (There is such a situation in Arkansas, where two Negro children are not permitted to attend school on a military base, because the base must comply with laws of the State.) The President feels strongly about this, but Justice has not yet moved. The President said that one answer might be to see that all children of Federal employees had equal rights to attend same school, but that was a cowardly way, in view of the Supreme Court's decision.